

What is claimed is:

1           1. A competitive, availability prediction system for  
2 predicting relative, competitive availability of seating on an  
3 airline flight comprises:

4                 an availability predictor that predicts seating  
5 availability on a competitive flight;

6                 an availability system that produces an actual  
7 availability response for a flight; and

8                 decision logic that compares the predicted answer  
9 from the availability predictor and the potential answer from the  
10 availability system to establish a decision with respect to  
11 actual availability.

12           2. The system of claim 1 wherein the decision of the  
13 decision logic is a bias that determines whether the potential  
14 answer should be modified based upon the relative competitive  
15 position of the competitor represented by the availability  
16 predictor.

17           3. The system of claim 1 further comprising:  
18                 modifying logic that is responsive to the  
19 availability response from the availability system and from the  
20 bias from the decision logic to modify the actual availability  
21 answer in accordance with the bias.

22           4. The system of claim 1 wherein the decision logic  
23 determines whether the prediction from the availability predictor  
24 indicates that a competitor is in a more favorable or less  
25 favorable competitive position than the answer produced by the  
26 availability system.

1           5.    The system of claim 1 wherein the decision as to  
2 an actual availability answer is based on the message from the  
3 decision logic.

1           6.    The system of claim 1 wherein the message from the  
2 decision logic can have a plurality of states.

1           7.    The system of claim 6 wherein one of the states  
2 include a neutral state that is does not tend to modify the  
3 potential answer received from the availability system.

1           8.    The system of claim 6 wherein one of states biases  
2 a potential answer towards answering that a seat is available.

1           9.    The system of claim 6 wherein one of states biases  
2 a potential answer towards answering that a seat is not  
3 available.

1           10.   The system of claim 6 wherein state depends upon  
2 the relative competitive position of the competitor represented  
3 by the availability predictor.

1           11.   The system of claim 3 wherein the decision logic  
2 determines whether the competitor's available booking codes are  
3 at a lower price than those which the availability system  
4 indicates the user of the system can offer.

1           12.   The system of claim 11 wherein if the competitor's  
2 available booking codes are not at a lower price, then the system  
3 can return a bias towards making the seat unavailable.

1           13.   The system of claim 12 wherein if the competitor's

2 available booking codes are not at a lower price, then the system  
3 can test whether the original query was for a low cost fare and  
4 return a bias towards making the seat not available if the query  
5 was for a low fare.

1 14. The system of claim 11 wherein if the competitor's  
2 available booking codes are at a lower price than those being  
3 offered by the user of the system, the system returns a bias  
4 towards making the seat available.

1 15. The system of claim 11 wherein if the competitor's  
2 available booking codes are at a lower price than those being  
3 offered by the user of the system, the system determines whether  
4 the query was for a high cost fare, and returns a bias towards  
5 making the seat available if for a high cost fare.

1 16. The system of claim 1 wherein the messages that  
2 are returned change the availability message from the  
3 availability system.

1 *part 17* 17. A method of predicting relative, competitive  
2 availability of seating on an airline flight comprises:  
3 predicting seating availability on a competitive  
4 flight;  
5 providing an actual availability response for a  
6 flight; and  
7 comparing the predicted answer from the  
8 availability predictor and the potential answer from the  
9 availability system to establish a decision with respect to  
10 actual availability.

1 18. The method of claim 17 wherein comparing produces

2 a decision that is a bias that determines whether the potential  
3 answer should be modified based upon the relative competitive  
4 position of the competitor represented by the availability  
5 predictor.

1 19. The method of claim 17 further comprising:  
2 modifying the actual availability answer in  
3 accordance with the bias.

1 ~~20. The system of claim 17 further comprising:~~  
1 ~~determining whether the competitor's available~~  
2 ~~booking codes are at a lower price than those which the~~  
3 ~~availability system indicates the user of the system can offer.~~